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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/19/2026
TAGS: PREL PGOV MOPS PO
SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE FM OFFERS TO RESIGN IF CIA FLIGHT
ALLEGATIONS PROVE TRUE

REF: A. 2005 LISBON 1609
1B. LISBON 1921
1C. OCTOBER 12 DVC (WITH DOS DOD AND EMBASSY LISBON)

Classified By: POL CHIEF TROY FITRELL, REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

11. (S/NF) Summary: Portugal's Foreign Minister offered to resign if opposition forces can demonstrate any complicity on the part of the government regarding alleged illegal CIA rendition flights through Portuguese territory. While a government investigation has refuted these allegations, the saga continues due to continued opposition party and European Parliament pressure. This pressure complicates the US request to repatriate Guantanamo detainees via Portugal. End summary.

12. (U) Ongoing pressure from Portugal's Left Bloc and from the European Parliament led to a testy exchange in Portugal's Parliament on October 18, in which Foreign Minister Luis Amado offered to resign if the opposition could prove Government of Portugal (GOP) complicity with the USG regarding alleged illegal CIA flights violating Portuguese sovereignty.

13. (U) Amado's most recent testimony reflected that of his predecessor, Diogo Freitas do Amaral in December 2005 (Ref A) and his own earlier testimony on September 5 this year, noting the GOP had completed an investigation that discovered no information to support allegations that CIA flights violated Portugal's territory or airspace to transport terrorism suspects. Amado told the Parliamentary Committee that "None of the explanations or data collected... constitutes a credible indication that the law may have been broken on Portuguese soil." He went on to tell reporters that a joint investigation by four government departments, also involving the country's intelligence agencies, immigration service and flight control authorities, conducted a review of plane movements but found no firm evidence." Amado admitted that the alleged CIA flights might have come through Portugal, but added that Portugal "has nothing to be ashamed of." According to the Minister, there is no evidence that the CIA committed illegal acts in Portuguese territory and even stated that he has had nothing but "total transparency and cooperation" from American authorities.

14. (U) Freitas do Amaral had offered the government investigation as a way to address the allegations. The results, however, have not silenced the GOP's critics, especially in the Left Bloc or the European Parliament. Portugal's Parliament has established an ad hoc committee to continue hearings on the subject and a delegation from the European Parliament is scheduled to visit Portugal in December to interview Amado, who has declined to visit Brussels to meet with Euro Deputies.

Effect on Repatriation Request

15. (S/NF) Amado's testimony reflects the continued political and media pressure on the GOP regarding this subject and makes the GOP's efforts to assist in repatriation of Guantanamo detainees all the more difficult. It is critical that Washington readers recognize the GOP's need to ensure that it is on solid legal ground regarding our request on detainees.

16. (S/NF) Portuguese law, as interpreted by the GOP (which could change), requires written assurance by the final destination country that detainees will not be tortured or receive the death penalty as well as a US guarantee that they will be treated according to internationally-recognized conventions in the destination country. Without these assurances, the GOP will have difficulty in supporting repatriation flights through Portuguese territory or airspace. We eagerly await Washington addressees response to the Portuguese points as discussed Ref C. The GOP will undoubtedly expect this issue to be discussed at the October 24 meeting between Amado and Secretary Rice in Washington.

The Media

17. (U) The local press eagerly reprints hearsay on this tantalizing subject as left wing politicians unveil "new facts" every few days to fan the political fires. Post believes the media will continue to sensationalize the issue as long as it has legs.

Comment

18. (S/NF) The normally unflappable Amado lost his cool during the testimony; an event that is completely out of character and shows the effects of unrelenting media and political attacks. Despite this outburst, we believe Amado will

continue to reiterate what the investigation has revealed - the government has no evidence of illegal CIA flights on/through Portuguese territory. However, Post underscores the delicate balancing act Amado is confronting in minimizing damage to his government - however unwarranted - due to the CIA Rendition investigation while trying to convince it to grant our request to repatriate Guantanamo detainees through Lajes. Right now, it would be to our advantage to stroke him a lot.

Hoffman